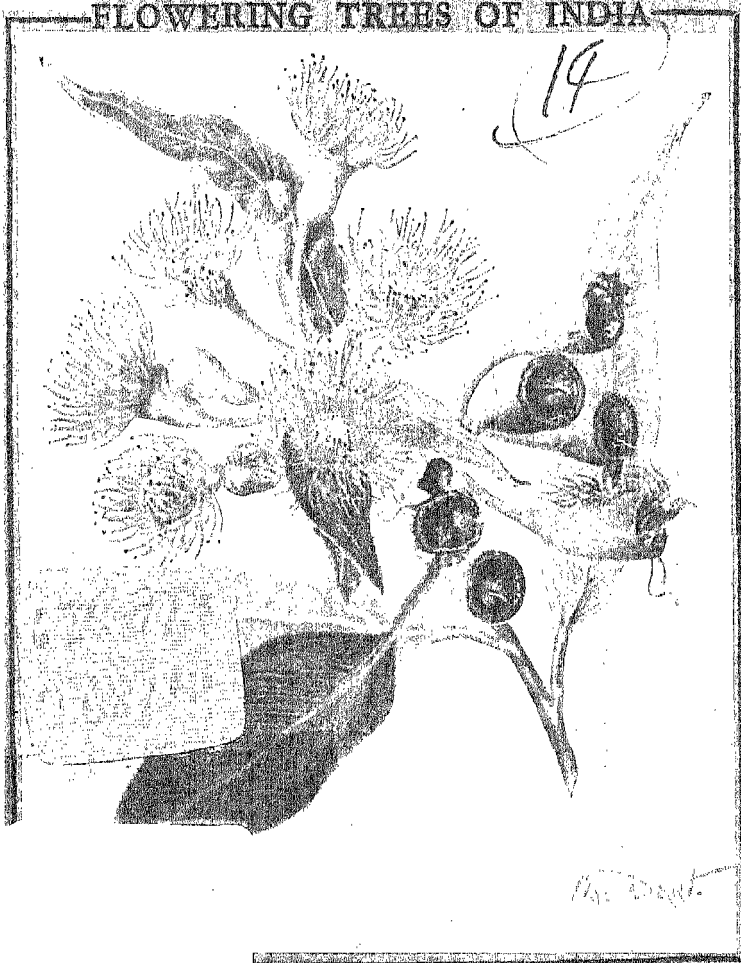




NURSERIES OF HEAVEN.  
FLOWERING TREES OF INDIA



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FLOWERING TREES  
OF INDIA

“ Look for me in the Nurseries of Heaven.”  
FRANCIS THOMPSON (1859–1907).

NURSERIES OF HEAVEN.

FLOWERING TREES OF INDIA

*by*

TORFRIDA

ILLUSTRATED

*by*

MAY DART

58666



IARI

THACKER & CO., LTD.  
BOMBAY



# NURSERIES OF HEAVEN SERIES

BIRDS.

WILD FLOWERS OF INDIA.

FLOWERING TREES OF INDIA.

MORE BIRDS OF INDIA.

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## *Introduction*

“ Is anyone sick of the sordidness of Life ?  
Let him to the tents of flowering trees.”

MARY WEBB.

**A**MONG our greatest friends should be counted trees. They give us their shade from the hot sun and the bright glow of their burning warms us when it is cold. Some also provide us with medicine when we are sick and if that does not cure us they bear us to our last long rest or turn our body back to dust so that our spirit may rise to Heaven unencumbered.

But above all, trees enrich our minds in awe and wonder at their great loftiness ; the beauty of their shape, the scent and colour of their flowers ; and it is small wonder that trees are held sacred among some people.

How wise must be the trees which have attained great age. Do they look down on men with all their wisdom wondering :—

“ What ! are you children quarrelling again ?

I heard your great, great, great-grandfather doing the same. What a pity.”

Or perhaps from a scientific point of view a tree may gain our admiration.

What else in the world can make water flow upwards with no ugly mechanical contrivance ?

What wonderful appliance is at work to enable leaves to remain cool and fresh when exposed to the fierce rays of the tropical sun, which otherwise would cause its temperature to rise 12°C a minute ? Consider the marvellous way messages are taken from the roots to every part of the tree, even to the tiniest bud on the topmost twig.

Trees in forests and woods are the clothes of the world, and for thousand of years men tore them off her, not realising the harm they did in thus exposing the earth to the fierce sun. Soon the water was no longer retained by the roots and gradually the soil lost its hold and the earth suffered and the climate changed.

In olden days the Brahmins forbade records being kept so we can only imagine the state of the forest—but we gain some idea from Neurclos, the General of Alexander the Great, who left us the story of the great Greek Invasion in 327 B.C. Then men's minds were so ignorant of India that they mixed up the Indus with the Nile. He described vast tracts of forest land, and they were again spoken of seven centuries later by the Italian Ambassador, who visited India when the Greeks occupied what is now Bihar and Orissa.

But the destruction of forest land continued right down to the Mahomedan conquest. Trees were treated like water. They were free to all. This destruction gradually affected the weather so that people had to move from their sheltered villages, for the sun now blazed too fiercely, because the water had disappeared. Recently the jungle has again grown over those villages, and traces may be found of them and of ruined

temples, with tamarind and mango trees growing in the heart of the jungle.

But the trees were not all cut down. Akbar ordered trees to be planted along the roads for shade. We read of forest land on the coast where the Venetians, Portuguese, Dutch and French settled, and of their ships sailing up rivers to Ports which are now far inland with only 2 feet of water.

But it was not until after the battle of Plassey in 1757, when the French were finally defeated in India, that the British began to treat trees with serious consideration. In 1800 England ran short of oak and ordered teak trees below 21 feet in girth to be felled for her ' wooden walls '. A Captain Watson was appointed Conservator of Forests in Malabar and Travancore in 1806, and 50 years later Lord Dalhousie laid down a policy for the preservation of trees in India.

He appointed a German forester, Brandis, to suggest methods of management, who showed himself such a capable officer in Burma, that in 1862 he was made ' Controller of Forests in India ' until he retired in 1883.

Brandis collected two other Germans to help him, Schlich and Ribbentrop, as well as a Scotsman, Grahame, and from these four men others were trained in Europe in the big forests of France, Germany and Scotland. But the Franco-Prussian war in 1866 put an end to their studies.

But the work did not end, for after some long discussions with Hooker, (who was then Director of Gardens at Kew and had written his great Flora of the Himalayas), a forest school was opened at Dehra Dun in 1878 by the Government of the North-West Frontier Province. It was so successful

that in 1884 the school was transferred to the Government of India under Captain Bailey, R.E.

However, the work of saving the trees was slow, for the minds of men from Europe were apt to work in acres instead of in thousands of acres and the rapid development of the country, at the end of the last century, demanded more and more timber for ships, dockyards, railways and road-making. So much was needed and so many trees had been destroyed that timber had to be imported from Norway.

The efficient forest laws too (made by Germans), caused great discontent among the people of India. They had been accustomed from time immemorial to gather sticks and feed their cattle on forest land, and they could not see the reason why it was now forbidden, or why they should not cut a tree to obtain honey or leaves for their tobacco.

The greatest difficulty with which the forest officer had to deal was against fire which spread for miles and miles, but gradually by a system of fire lanes and warning drums, less was burnt during the hot months.

By 1900 a record was made in 32,000 square miles being saved from fire. The forest service is now a perfect organization and at the Dehra Dun College men are trained to 'conserve' the trees of their own land. Hundreds of 'rangers' also are taught how to guard the woods with a vigilant eye.

Surely we should pay honour to those pioneers in the service, who led lonely lives in mosquito ridden forests, and who explored vast unknown tracts, where rest-houses now stand? They lived on a very small salary and were generally

hated by the Collector and P.W.D. Officer, for they were generally men of resource and their wisdom in dealing with the Indian ryot was learnt from their experience of having lived near them and knowing their peculiar ways. They were not bound by 'Red-tape'.

The trees described here are only a few of the beautiful ones in India. It will be noticed that no mention has been made of where a tree may be found ; or what time of the year it blooms ; for the simple reason that in different places, under varied climatic conditions, trees flower at different times. The general rule is that during 'the rains' a tree stores up the food it has imbibed so that 2 or 3 months after the rain has ended, it is able to shed its leaves and put forth its blossoms in glory, soon followed by lovely new foliage and fruit. The time spent by a tree in preparing for the event varies with each species.

In a tree we may see a perfect life. Every part does its work, there appears no commotion, no haste, little noise. Yet a tree gives food freely to many animals and shelter to many beasts and birds. It asks for little in return. It is not dull, and does not appear self-contented, but has an air of aspiration and joy in its existence. It does not struggle to be beautiful, it merely loves to live in harmony, so that all who see it are immensely satisfied, and filled with gladness.

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## BHENDI TREE

### *Thespesia Populnea*

*“ With eyes of gold and bramble dew.”*

R. L. STEVENSON (1850-1894).

- Family :* Malvaceæ.  
*Leaves :* Alternate simple.  
*Flowers :* Regular—Petals 5. Stamens numerous, united.  
*Ovary :* Superior.  
*Fruit :* A capsule.

When tired of the glare of the sun—tired of the hard parched earth—what joy to look upon the Bhendi tree with its bright refreshing shiny leaves.

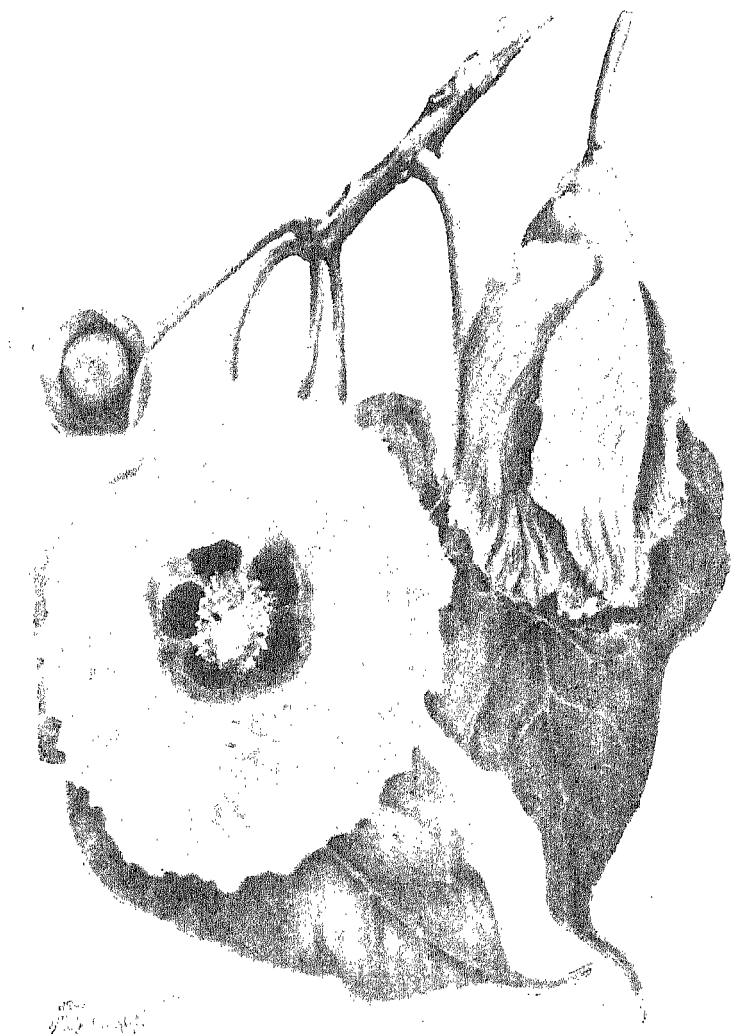
Even when the flowers are not in bloom, the leaves withering solitarily to a pure pale yellow, give the impression of flowers in the distance. For the flowers are pale yellow too with a dark eye in the centre.

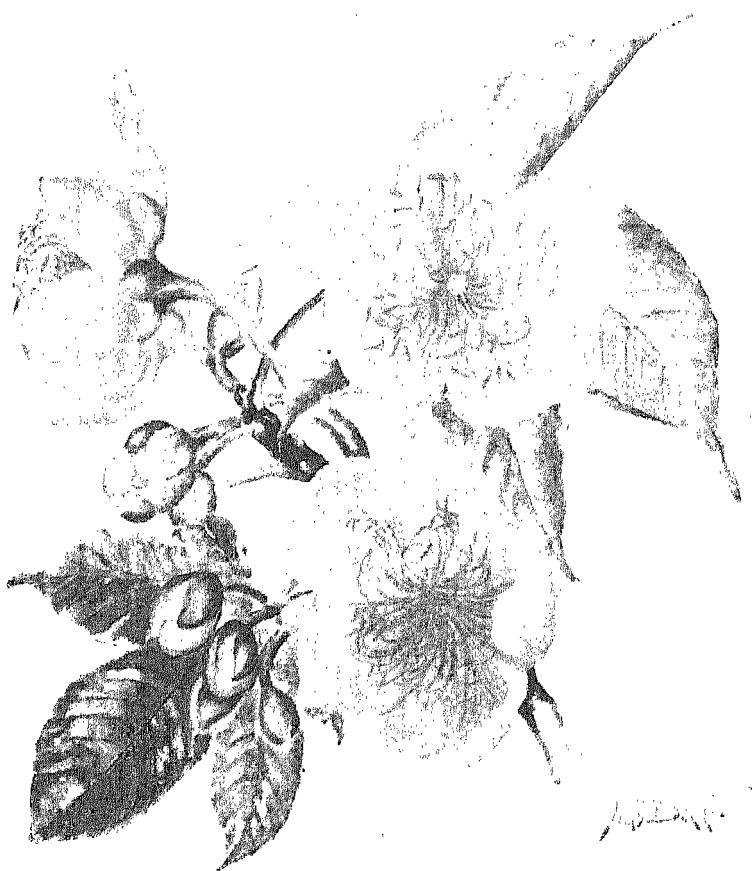
Through what long weary years those eyes have waited and watched. As a native on the coast of India it must have seen so much. The Phœnicians arriving centuries ago bringing Christianity, long before His word was brought to Europe, and that Christianity still exists on the South West coast today. It saw the Dutch explorers, the Portuguese, and French and finally the British, come to trade in India.

Meanwhile the Bhendi contributed its share for the wants of man. Boats and cartwheels were made of its timber, coffee bags and cigar wrappings of its leaves, dye from the capsules.

So well known, it earned many names such as ‘Tulip’ and ‘Umbrella’ tree, easy to understand, but ‘Portia’ tree is not readily recognised until one knows that the Tamil name was ‘Puvassai’ which gradually was converted to Portia by the English. Portia was that great character of Shakespeare who appealed to the Jews for mercy, and who said “How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.”

So also may we delight our eyes with the sight of the refreshing ‘Portia’ tree springing from the sun-baked ground.





## YELLOW SILK COTTON

### *Cochlospermum Gossypium*

*“ At whose sight all the stars  
Hide their diminished heads.”*

MILTON (1608-1674).

- Family:* Malvaceæ.  
*Leaves:* Alternate simple, with pointed lobes.  
*Flowers:* Regular—5 petals—sepals drop off when bud opens.  
*Ovary:* Superior.  
*Fruit:* A large pod.

The Yellow Silk Cotton hails from Ceylon, and though less spectacular than its cousin the Red variety, it has a beauty scarcely rivalled.

The tree, with straight smooth buttressed trunks, vine shaped leaves, and pure bright yellow flowers growing in bunches at the top of the tree, are often found growing near temples, and when in flower they harmonize with the long yellow robes of the Buddhists.

How exciting it must have been to the first explorers to India to see trees with such wonderful flowers—and then again what a surprise to find pods exuding a mass of cotton wool!

‘Kapok’ they called it and took it home to Holland to stuff pillows. The yellow silk cotton is warm, silky and soft, and especially good for the sick and weary, or makes a comfortable pad for a splint.

Then the gum was discovered oozing from the stems, which eventually found its way to America to be used for book binding and marbling paper.

Pliny named the tree *Gossypium* because of its cotton, and later Greeks added the ‘Cochloss’ which means shell-fish with a spiral shell, for that describes the twisted seed.

It is a pity more yellow silk cotton trees are not planted in India. They love hilly country, and thrive in poor soil and they have a great determination to grow.

I have known of one planted on the top of poor soil over a rubbish heap which had its top blown off twice and yet still persists in blossoming with its flowers of sunshine.

# FLAME OF THE FOREST

## Butea Frondosa

*"More than most fair, full of that heavenly fire  
Kindled above to show the Maker's glory."*

FULKE GREVILLE (1554-1628).

- Family :* Leguminosae.  
*Leaves :* Simple trifoliate.  
*Flowers :* Irregular, like a parrot's beak or 'lion's claws stained with blood'.  
*Ovary :* Inferior.  
*Fruit :* A velvety pod.

The Earl of Bute gave his name to this tree. He lived from 1713-1792 ; was educated at Eton, became a friend of King George III and Prime Minister of England. But his heart was not in his work for his administration has been described as the most disgraceful in British History. No wonder, for what other Prime Minister has had the time to engrave a 'Book of British Plants'?

The Bengali name of the tree is 'Palasi' and hundreds of them grow outside Calcutta beyond the swamps of Bengal. Amid that mud Clive defeated the French under Suraj-ud-Dowlah in 1757. It was a victory indeed, for the great Indian General, fighting for France had the advantage of 68,000 men and 53 guns against Clive's mere 3,000 men and 10 guns. The battle raged all day, and the rain poured down on those swamps so that before long the French guns were soaked and useless. The British kept their powder dry, and by evening their guns had it all their own way and the proud Suraj-ud-Dowlah was beaten for ever.

Beyond the swamps the flaming flowers seemed to wave banners in honour of such a victory and so the battle was named Plassey after the tree, whose flowers are so often offered to the goddess of Blood, Kali.

If you are fortunate in seeing the Buteas in flower, in the early spring, lighting the forest for miles upon miles with their flames, the name will never then be confused with other trees who have 'red' flowers. It is a sight ever remembered. They are harbingers of more glorious trees.





# THE RUSTY SHIELD BEARER

## *Peltophorum Ferrugineum*

*“ Time will run back and fetch the age of gold.”*

MILTON (1608-1674).

- Family :* Leguminosæ.  
*Leaves :* Opposite compound.  
*Flowers :* Almost regular—crumpled in bud.  
*Ovary :* Superior.  
*Fruit :* Winged flat pod.

It happened long years ago that a man who had been banished to the Andaman Islands for his life-time was told one day to plant some young trees. These had been brought from Brazil and because no one knew their name they were called the ‘ Little Braziletto trees ’ and with that name they came to India.

By and by the trees grew in the Andamans and bore the most beautiful spikes of brilliant yellow flowers standing like stiff candles on the altar of Heaven, and later when they faded, rows of copper coloured pods took their place in the shape of old-fashioned shields. Then the prisoners called it the ‘ Rusty Shield Tree ’.

One day the prisoner heard a sound on the trees ‘ Tonk Tonk Tonk ’ it was the copper-smith bird calling on his favourite tree—‘ Where have I heard that sound before ’? he asked himself and he remembered then his days in India. He recollected his childhood and in thinking of them he realised how easy his life had been made by his fond mother, so that when hardships came his way in later life he had no idea how to deal with them and went astray. Day by day he listened to the bird and watched the lovely trees and gradually his mind changed, so much that he was allowed to return to India to his home.

Back in his native land he heard the copper-smith again on the tree of the “ Rusty Shield Bearer ” and he told people of the name given to the trees in the Andamans.

Now, planted down the streets of Bombay alongside those of the Gul-Mohur, they are pointed out to visitors as one of the glories of the East.



## THE MOUNTAIN EBONY

### The white and variegata *Bauhinea*

*"One man in a thousand, Solomon says,  
Will stick more close than a brother."*

KIPLING (1865-1936).

- Family* : Leguminosæ. Sub-order Cæsalpinea.  
*Leaves* : Alternate—Simple close down at night.  
*Flowers* : Not pea-like—5 almost equal petals.  
*Stamens* : Five (one odd sepal behind).  
*Ovary* : Superior.  
*Fruit* : A pod.

John and Caspar Bauhin of France were twin brothers and students of botany. To every lovely tree they wished to give their name, but it was difficult to decide which tree was the most beautiful. At last the problem was decided for them for they discovered a little crooked tree in India, Burma and Ceylon which had leaves in two pieces like a camel's foot growing together like twins. 'These are us' they said delighted, 'this must be our tree', but they were even more delighted when they saw that their tree had the most beautiful flowers of all the trees in India.

The scent is enchanting and for those who have not seen the White Mountain Ebony in spring, life is poor indeed !

Besides the flower, every part of the tree was discovered to be useful, even the root, says a book in 1808, 'will provide an anti-fat remedy for corpulent persons'.

For those who suffer from scurvy a cure may be made by mixing the bark of the *Bauhinea* tree with the juice of the *strobilanthes* flower—10 tolas each used with ginger—Me thinks we'll endure the scurvy long for the *strobilanthes* only flowers every 7-12 years !

The *Bauhineas* are known as "orchid trees" and in South India as "St. Thomas' tree," perhaps because they grow on St. Thomas' Mount near Madras. I think the sight of such a tree must have put all doubt from the mind of St. Thomas. He only had to see once those dark twisted stems holding up their pure white flowers against the heavenly blue sky to believe God was near.





*No. 10*

## JAVA CASSIA

### *Cassia Javanica*

*" Its beauties charm the gods above  
Its fragrance is the breath of love "*

SAPPHO (600 B.C.).

- Family :* Leguminosæ—Sub-order Caesal pineæ.  
*Leaves :* Compound.  
*Flowers :* 5 almost regular petals.  
*Stamens :* Five long pistil.  
*Ovary :* Superior.  
*Fruit :* Thin pod.

The cassias are a tribe of trees named by the Greeks, and belong to the sub-order called after an Italian, Andreas Caesalpinus of 1519–1603. The yellow 'Laburnum' is the only one which is a native of India. The pink varieties have been brought to India in this century from Java, and Burma. Although they are very beautiful, the trees do not last long, and after 15 or 20 years fall a prey to insects and rot. The difference in the many varieties are well described by the Bombay Natural History Society and most people agree that the Java Cassia in flower is one of the most beautiful sights in the world.

At that time of the year when the heat begins to be oppressive, when the dust rolls up in squalls, and when there is no hope of rain for several months, then the sight of the Cassia lightens the heart.

Their pale green leaves make a cradle of rest along the slender smooth boughs for the fragrant blooms—as frail and transparent as the rainbow bubbles of the foam.

So do not despair when full of care and sorrow weighs you down.

Look up instead and see the lovely Cassias, which in Bombay, make a heaven of a railway station and bring joy to a street where trams clatter by.

Under the stars and in the moonlight you can believe they are made by a magical hand.

If you see them in the faint light of the dawn, shaking off their diamonds of dew as they wake up to greet the sun, then you can no longer be dismayed with sordid ugliness which tears the mind, for you will have seen—'the Cassias flowering again'!

# THE CORAL TREE

## *Erythrina Indica*

*"The poetry of earth is never dead."*

KEATS (1795-1821).

*Family:* Leguminosæ. *Leaves:* Simple-trifoliate.

*Flowers:* Irregular in spikes. *Ovary:* Inferior.

*Fruit:* Long black pod containing large seeds with hooked point.

Like so many flowering trees in India the sight of a coral tree in bloom has to be seen to be believed !

The leaves all shed and gone, it looks like a tree that is dead, and then the great scarlet torches burst and their brilliant colour against the hot deep blue sky makes it seem like a tree in a romantic fairy tale.

Legends tell us that Krishna saw it growing in Indra's garden and while the gods were busy arguing, he stole it and brought it to earth. We can imagine him tending the tree he loved during his days as a youngster in the deep forests.

He took the *Erythrina* and left a torch of wisdom for the world. 'To attain power over others' he preached 'man must first know himself'.

The trifoliate leaves are also mentioned in Hindu Mythology for they resemble Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva, and certainly this tree seems to be the abode of the gods, for if there was no other tree in all the world, it would serve us all our lives.

Its wood is soft and is easily made into timber, its branches are straight making useful support for vines. Boxes and catamarans are made from the trunk. The leaves are eaten in curries, and in olden days they were used to cure diseases of the eye, and relieve pain in teeth and ears.

Moreover it provides food to every bird and insect.

Listen to the babble on its branches when the flowers are out !

Starlings, mynahs, crows, sunbirds, and drongos, feast upon its nectar, and butterflies hover round. Even black ants thrust in for their share.

Lastly, in Assam its wood is burnt for cremations.

The *Erythrina* is known even in Trinidad where it is called the 'Bois Immortelle', which appears to be a far better name for such a wonderful tree.





## THE GUL-MOHUR

### Poinciana Regia

*"A vague, a dizzy, a tumultuous joy."*

SOUTHEY (1774-1843).

- Family :* Leguminosæ. (Pea Family). Sub-order Poinciana.  
*Leaves :* Alternate compound.  
*Flowers :* Irregular. Not like the papilionaceæ family, but unequal.  
*Ovary :* Superior.  
*Fruit :* A pod.

In the 17th Century, the Governor of the Antilles in the Bahamas strutted in his garden under the rich red flowered trees which he named 'Flamboyante' and 'Fleur-de-Pardis', and as his friends set sail back to the old world he gave them a gift of the seeds from these beautiful trees. But those explorers of old found them growing in Madagascar, lighting the whole island with their flaming flowers.

From there they brought them to India, and though, in the last century, they were only found in Botanical gardens, now, throughout the length and breadth of India of the plains, there is scarcely a garden which does not claim these "Royal trees" or "Poincianas."

It flowers when the hot sun is most oppressive, When the summer sky hangs heavy over head, its deep blue gives an almost unnaturally wonderful background to the dazzling Gul-Mohur. No leaves relieve the brilliant colour of the flowers which spread like a huge scarlet tent over the brown burnt ground.

The long black pods hang like swords, rattling their sabres, ready to fight any intruder.



# TEMPLE TREE

## Plumeria Accutifolia

*"Clothed with the light of the night on the dew."*

SWINBURNE (1837-1909).

- Family :* Apocynaceæ (Periwinkle Family).  
*Leaves :* Opposite. Simple.  
*Flowers :* Regular. Petals 5 twisted in bud.  
Stamens. Five.  
*Ovary :* Superior.  
*Fruit :* A pod, which seldom produces seeds.

Plumeria, a Frenchman wanted to be very rich, so he asked the advice of a sooth-sayer who told him that he must find a tree whose flowers were the colour of a frail new moon ; whose fragrance overwhelmed the soul at night ; and which grew near the burial grounds of Mahomedans. On finding the tree he would grow rich.

He went to Persia, but there no tree provided riches, only bark to heal sores. In Ceylon he discovered 'the Life Tree' which could grow after being taken out of the ground, but still he was poor.

He despaired of attaining his object until one day he reached South India and there he learnt a secret.

'You want riches' ? He was asked 'then go to the temple at midnight, and when the scent of the trees steals over the garden, in the light of the full moon, shake the tree and it will shed gold coins in plenty'.

Plumeria did as he was bidden—and as he shook the milky stumpy branches of the tree, he saw the flowers fall like a shower of golden 'pagoda' coins, that gleamed in the moonlight like stars. Their scent wafted his thoughts to Heaven——. At last Plumeria understood the wisdom of the sooth-sayer that real riches in life are the beauty of sweet smelling flowers under the immortal stars.

He had travelled far and as he returned home he propagated 'Pagoda' trees.

In England it was first known in 1770 and Botanists attached the name Plumeria to the tree for he had done much to make the tree and its beauty known.





# SCARLET CORDIA

## Cordia Sebestena

“ Drink thy wine with a merry heart.”

ECCLESIASTES.

- Family :* Boraginaceæ.  
*Leaves :* Alternate simple.  
Stamens. Regular 5 toothed calyx.  
*Stamens :* 5, double row, curled backwards in bud.  
*Ovary :* Superior.  
*Fruit :* Drupe fleshy.

As the leaves of Borage cheer the heart, when added to wine, so does the Cordia tree, of the same family, rejoice our eyes.

It is exceptionally attractive, for it is one of the few trees in India, which retain its leaves and blossoms all the year round.

As a table decoration it is most beautiful, for the indescribable colour of the flowers, with the background of deep green leaves, make a lovely contrast with bright silver and dazzling glass.

There are many hundreds of Cordias of which most have white flowers. A well-known variety is the “ Cordia myxa ” which took its name, Sebestan, from an old town in Eastern Turkey. It lies not far from where the Tigris has its source and near the old temple of Diana the Huntress. It was there that she wafted Iphiginea away in a cloud, when she relented of her demand for a human sacrifice, after her temper had been roused because Agamemnon had killed one of her stags.

The pulp, surrounding its plum-like fruit, contains crytoliths of calcium carbonate and was used from time immemorial as a cure for coughs and colds. The Scarlet Cordia comes from Cuba and there the natives use the pulp as bird-lime.

Allied to the pretty “ Forget-me-not ” and “ Cherry-pie ”, it is a pity that the lovely scarlet Cordia is not as widely cultivated. Forget-it-not when you wish something new for your garden ; then you will have something unique and spectacular for your table.

## Menecylon Malabaricum

“ *Oh idle Thought*

*In Nature there is nothing Melancholy ”.*

COLERIDGE (1772–1834).

- Family :* Melastomaceæ.  
*Leaves :* Opposite. Simple.  
*Flowers :* Regular conspicuous anthers.  
*Stamens :* Equal number double that of petals.  
*Ovary :* Inferior.  
*Fruit :* Berry or capsule.

It is strange that so pretty a flower should be connected with melancholy, but it is because it relieves sadness that it is so named. The astringent qualities of its berries cures that ‘blackness’ which sours the body, and if not rejected, finally pervades the mind, dulling the spirit with brooding depression.

The juice from the berries is also used as a mordant in dyeing to enable clothes to retain their colour.

The Menecylon is common in the hills in sholas, but the pretty blue flowers growing so closely on the stem are not readily seen.

So, when you are sad, look for the Menecylon Malabaricum, for often, when distraught with worry and dismay, its simple beauty may console and soothe the mind, bringing fresh hope and renewed courage.





# OSBECKIA

## Tipu China

*"No tree in all the grove but has its charms  
Though each its own peculiar hue."*

COWPER (1731-1800).

- Family :* Melastomaceæ.  
*Leaves :* Opposite. Simple.  
*Flowers :* Regular—petals 4 or 5. Anthas conspicuous, knobs at base.  
*Stamens :* Double, or same number as petals.  
*Ovary :* Inferior.  
*Fruit :* A capsule or berry.

The Osbeckia belongs to a family whose name to the Greeks meant blackness, but it was not a dark brooding spirit to which it alluded but to the black stain left in the mouth when the berries of some of the species were eaten.

Many of the flowers grow wild in the Nilgiris but this tree, which is said to be a native of Brazil, is found cultivated in gardens only. The popular name is 'Tipu-China' which indicates that it came from Tibet or China. Another name was 'Spider Flower'. Notice the long anthas, or pollen sacs, which protude from the flower like the long legs of a spider.

But its present name is derived from Peter Osbeck who was born in 1723.

In the year that the Battle of Trafalgar was being fought, Linnaeus was writing his great books on plants, and among his friends was a clergyman, a Swede like himself. Linnaeus often went to visit him, for Peter Osbeck, having a kind and sympathetic nature, was always ready to listen to the learned naturalist. He in turn became a naturalist, and we can imagine his pleasure when just before his death, Linnaeus told him that he had given his name to a whole family of plants.

"The deep purple and crimson petals remind me of the gorgeous colours of your altar cloths" said Linnaeus—and so what had been called 'Plerona of Triana' was henceforth known as 'The Osbeckia'.

Little dreamt the humble Peter that his name would endure down the centuries.



## THE FOUNTAIN TREE

### *Spathodea Campanulata*

*"The dew, of summer nights, collected still to make  
the morning precious."*

KEATS (1795-1821).

*Family:* Bignoniaceæ. 'Trumpet Flowers'. *Leaves:* Opposite compound. *Flowers:* Showy bell shaped—Irregular. *Stamens:* Five—2 long, 2 short, 1 sterile. *Ovary:* Superior. *Fruit:* A capsule.

Far from the main roads in South India, away off the beaten track, along winding narrow lanes, tea estates are found. Acres and acres of neat restful green bushes are seen with trees planted at regular spaces for shade.

But at times a lovely treat is in store, for on many estates the Fountain tree has been planted. Unlike most trees in India its leaves remain on the tree nearly all the year round, so shade is ensured always, and twice a year the Fountain tree has flowers.

And what flowers—no mean niggardly delicate blooms, but enormous heads of brilliant orangy scarlet, clustered together so tightly that only three or four of the buds have room to open at a time. The buds are the shape of a large blade or scapula (hence its Latin name) and they are big enough to store up water.

Thus has it earned its name of 'Fountain' for when they are squeezed nearly a cup full of water squirts out. "What is more fun than to play with water?" say the little sons of the coolies gathering tea.

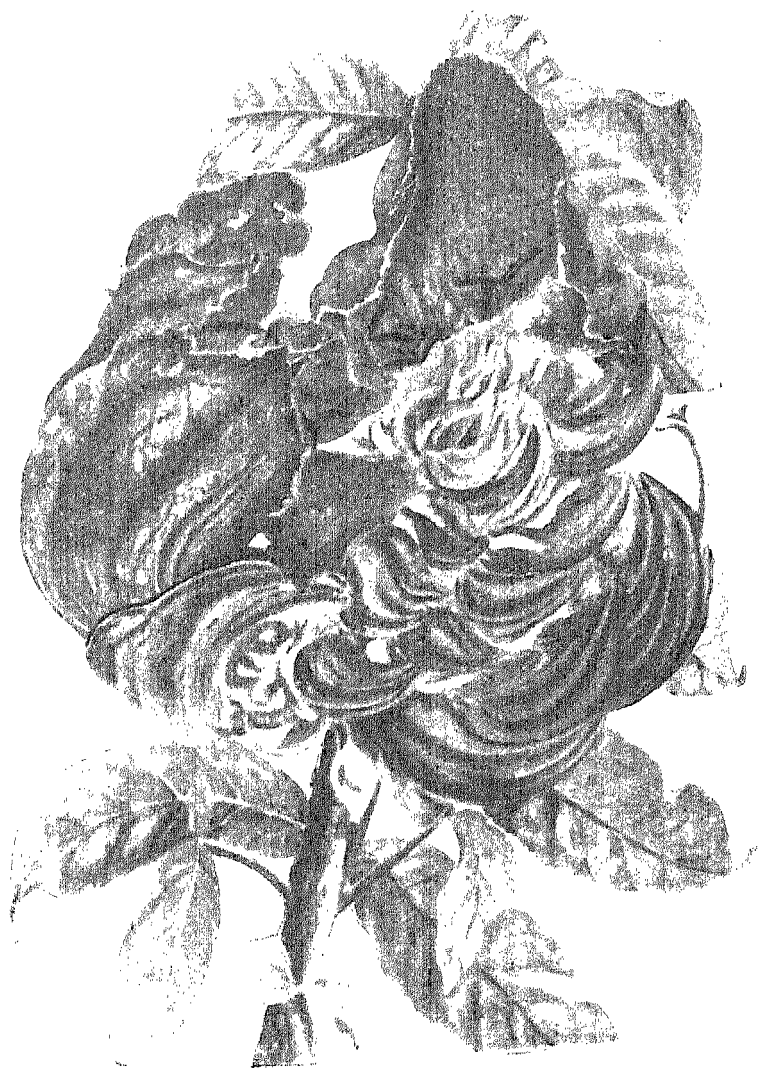
The magnificent tree adorns parks and gardens too—for like all the Bignoniaceæ Family, with their 'Trumpet' flowers, it demands attention.

Jean Baul Bignon was the Court Librarian to Louis XIV of France and he must have inherited the job from his grandfather who was appointed by Richelieu. France prospered under Louis XIV, a King with little heart but shrewd wisdom.

In his time Versailles was started in 1661 but by the time Bignon died in 1743 the greatness of France was already beginning 'to be scattered to the winds'.

It is curious to think that many men would be forgotten if it were not for trees carrying their names.

Their loveliness endures for ever.





# JACARANDA

## Jacaranda mimosaeifolca

“ And brings all Heaven before mine eyes.”

MILTON (1608-1674.)

- Family :* Bignoniaceæ (Trumpet Flowers).  
*Leaves :* Compound pinnate opposite.  
*Flowers :* Irregular—showy bell shaped.  
*Stamens :* Five—2 long, 2 short, 1 sterile.  
It is said that the tree will only bloom on old wood when the branches are weighed downwards.  
*Ovary :* Superior.  
*Fruit :* A pod like 2 pennies.

*Native of Brazil, brought to Ceylon in 1885.*

Did'st see the jacaranda trees  
Beside the lawn, beyond the lake ?  
With boughs bowed low, with showers of flowers,  
And feathery leaves on darkened stems ?  
Festoons of glory feast the eyes  
And weave a wreath of pure delight,  
Spinning a magic spell.  
They rouse great Thoughts of far Beyond  
Where winds blow weariness aloft,  
There sunlight balm the mind of care,  
Where Beauty's Queen, and flowers spread  
A carpet at her feet.

Spoil not those dreams, but leave the flowers  
To gaze at stars in midnight hours ;  
And whisper in the wakening dawn  
Mingling sweet music with the morn.  
They sound a trumpet call at noon,  
They toll at evenings end.  
Forever singing songs of joy,  
Murmuring a message on the breeze  
To those who know, for those who love  
The jacaranda trees.

L. T. R.

# THE GREAT MAGNOLIA

## *Magnolia grandiflora*

*"A brotherhood of venerable trees."*

WORDSWORTH (1770-1850.)

- Family :* Magnoliaceæ.  
*Leaves :* Alternate, simple.  
*Flowers :* Sepals and petals in multiples of three.  
*Ovary :* Superior.  
*Fruit :* Numerous carpels.

The Magnolia is one of the few lovely flowering trees which grows wild in India. It is found in the Nilgiris and the Himalayas where the huge simple leaves and its massive solid flowers correspond well with the gigantic mountains and rolling downs.

It is named after Pierre Magnol who was a professor of medicine at Montpellier. Born in 1638, he lived in that great age when men were eager to discover the wonders of the New World and keen to see for themselves the glories of the East.

The Magnolia has many smaller relations among the "Chumpas" which also have creamy white blossoms of great beauty and fragrance.

The "grandiflora" is attributed as sacred to VISHNU by the Hindus. He, with Brahma and Shiva, is one of the gods of the great Trimurti, and as the god of grace and preservation, it is believed that the river Ganges sprang from his toe. He came to earth in various forms or "avatars". Among the most known were KRISHNA and BUDDHA, and his followers look forward to the day when he will visit the world again. Then he will ride a white horse and carry a flaming sword before him. All evil will be slain ; Beauty will be seen once more on earth.

Then again the grand old Magnolia Tree will be worshipped in reverence and in the shade of its lofty boughs men will understand Peace.





## RED GUM

### *Eucalyptus*

*“Groves whose rich trees wept  
Odorous gums and balm.”*

MILTON (1608-1674.)

*Family* : *Mertaceæ*.      *Leaves* : Opposite when young—dotted with glands. Alternate when mature—lateral veins.      *Flowers* : In bunches. Petals 5, which are pushed off by the stamens.      *Stamens* : Numerous and red.      *Ovary* : Inferior.      *Fruit* : A capsule.

The *Eucalyptus* earns its name from the cap covering the fruit which in Greek is ‘*Kaluptus*’ and thousands of these little round peaked caps are seen fallen below the trees.

It is difficult to imagine the Nilgiris now with no gum trees, but over a hundred years ago two young British engineers struggled up the mountains from the hot plains, and hacking their way through the jungle and following tiny tracks they at last came out on a highland plateau. They had found the Nilgiris !

It was not long before others followed and determined to live in its delightful cool air—but the rain—the rain—the rain—it was too much.

In 1843 a Captain Cotton, also a young engineer, had a bright idea and he imported and planted gum trees from Australia. In 10 years the young saplings had grown to tall trees and it was obvious that these trees worked magic with the climate !

In time hundreds of acres of gum trees were planted, which evaporated so much moisture from the atmosphere with their roots and leaves that the tropical heat and deluge of rain became more equalised. The Nilgiris became even a more lovely place in which to live.

Then other uses were found for the trees—after 20 years, the then massive gum trees were cut down for timber, as railway sleepers and bridges—and lastly for fuel.

It is from the young leaves that oil is taken. It is well known in preventing and curing colds.

Once in India the gums were wanted everywhere, but the tree of Australia struck. She will not grow by the sea, or where the snow falls—so—take care of our good friends in the Nilgiris—for they serve us well.